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SUBJECT: UN PEACEKEEPING: AMBASSADOR RICE ADDRESSES C-34

REF: USUN 065

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The UN Special Committee for Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) opened its annual session with a general debate on February 23-24. Ambassador Rice addressed the C-34 on February 24, delivering a message that the U.S. is ready to consider fresh peacekeeping approaches in cooperation with a broad spectrum of partners and that UN peacekeeping is a priority for the U.S. Other delegations -- including Russia and China at the ambassadorial level -- spoke about peacekeeping reform, possible strengthening of the UN Police Division, and protection of civilians. UN U/SYGs LeRoy and Malcorra warned participants that the dramatic growth in the scale of UN peacekeeping operations in recent years risks overstressing the system. The C-34 session is scheduled to continue through March 20. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The United Nations Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, also known as the C-34, reports to the UN General Assembly through the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (4th Committee) and meets annually for a month to negotiate a report on various peacekeeping principles and operational guidance for the UN. In 2007 and 2008, the C-34 failed to reach consensus during its normal session, and negotiations lingered for over two months on both occasions. This year's C-34 session opened with a general debate on February 23-24 and will continue through March 20.

¶3. (SBU) On February 23, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Under Secretary General Alain Le Roy opened the general debate by describing UN peacekeeping as a victim of its own success in that a decade of unprecedented growth -- resulting in 112,000 field personnel serving in 18 UNPKOs as well as peacebuilding and political missions -- has left the UN struggling with "sheer overstretch." He predicted that 2009 would be a critical year during which the UN must find adequate resources for increasingly complex, robust mandates in difficult and often hostile environments. Le Roy also noted that DPKO continues to rely on a small group of countries for the bulk of troop contributions. Le Roy encouraged the UN and its member states to come up with practical ways to ensure ongoing missions were fully supported and to tackle capacity challenges that he feared could otherwise encumber or even derail future peacekeeping deployments.

¶4. (SBU) Following Le Roy, UN Department of Field Support (DFS) Under Secretary General Susanna Malcorra said that the "stress and stretch" faced by DPKO applied to DFS as well. Malcorra said the biggest challenge facing DFS was in managing the immediate and huge operational demands placed on it, while also taking time to develop a longer term strategy to more systematically address those demands. Malcorra promised to work with member states on a multi-pronged

support strategy for the future. She also commented on the difficulties faced by specific peacekeeping operations, including in Darfur and Chad, where she said the supply chain was particularly difficult to manage.

15. (SBU) In a departure from past practice, Ambassador Rice delivered the U.S. intervention at the PermRep level, conveying a clear message that the U.S. is ready to engage with a broad spectrum of peacekeeping stakeholders. She told participants specifically that the U.S. looks forward "to exploring, during this meeting and on a continuing basis, the development and expansion of partnerships across the board with supporters of peacekeeping to respond to critical and emerging needs." She said "we are ready to contemplate the launch of new reforms, wherever these hold the promise of bringing all key constituencies together to address the challenges that we collectively face." These challenges include, she said, improving the flow of relevant information for Security Council deliberations, addressing the gap between peacekeeping operations and processes and the needs of potential troop contributors, seeking cost effectiveness, providing adequate resources for the UN Secretariat, and ensuring that individual PKOs respect the societies into which they are deployed.

16. (SBU) Russian PermRep Churkin called directly for peacekeeping reform, suggesting that peacekeeping could be most improved in the area of operations management. He advocated improvement in the way the Security Council considers peacekeeping mandates and called for more active collaboration involving the Security Council with troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat. Churkin reiterated the Russian Federation's frequent call for the revitalization of the Military Staff Committee and also called for the strengthening of the Office of Military Affairs and the UN Police Division.

17. (SBU) Chinese Deputy PermRep Liu Zhenmin agreed that the Security Council was facing new challenges in crafting peacekeeping mandates, such as the protection of civilians, but insisted that any changes in peacekeeping practice or doctrine should be approved by the majority of UN member states. Suggesting that the surge in UN peacekeeping has created a gap between the proposed mandates and available resources, Liu said the Security Council and the Secretariat should systematically assess all peacekeeping missions to ensure they are able to carry out their functions.

18. (SBU) Representatives from regional groups also addressed the C-34. Morocco (on behalf of the NAM) called for the committee's full involvement with DPKO and the Security Council while creating peacekeeping operations and called for all developed countries, especially the P-5, to share the burden of peacekeeping and commit their national troops to deployment under United Nations command and control. The Czech Republic (EU) and New Zealand (CANZ) both said the protection of civilians should be an integral part of peacekeeping operations and both supported enhancing the capacity of the UN Police Division. Mexico (Rio Group) called for greater coordination with the Peacebuilding Commission, especially as mission mandates were expanding into other areas such as the promotion of reconstruction and socio-economic development. In total, 32 delegations took the floor during the C-34 general debate.

19. (U) The conclusion of the general debate marks the end of the formal session and the beginning of discussions of the C-34 working group. From February 25-27, the Secretariat holds a series of presentations on peacekeeping issues: DPKO/DFS restructuring, mission planning, UN policing, peacebuilding and early

recovery, mission management, deployable rule of law capacity, technical monitoring, and the implementation of mandated tasks. The C-34 will recess from March 2-6 for bilateral meetings and regional group consultations. Negotiations of the C-34 report are scheduled for March 9-20, and if consensus is reached, it will be adopted on March 20.

Rice